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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 MANILA 000855

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/15/2017
TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PINS](#) [PREL](#) [RP](#)
SUBJECT: PUSHING THE PHILIPPINES TO DO MORE ON KILLINGS

REF: A. MANILA 777

[1](#)B. MANILA 683

Classified By: Ambassador Kristie A. Kenney, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (SBU) Summary. Philippine media covered extensively the U.S. Senate hearings on unlawful killings in the Philippines. Ambassador and senior Embassy officials continue active outreach to underscore U.S. concern and to plan additional initiatives to support Philippine efforts to bring culprits of such killings to justice. Upcoming visits by the new PACOM Commander, EAP A/S Hill, and others will provide excellent platforms to reiterate U.S. views and to encourage further steps by the Philippine government and armed forces. End Summary.

Local reactions

[1](#)2. (SBU) Philippine reactions to the March 14 U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearings on unlawful killings in the Philippines varied widely. Philippine House Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Cuenco condemned the hearing as an "invasion of our sovereignty" and called upon the government to protest. Executive Secretary Ermita clarified publicly that "we are not against it (the hearing) because in the first place there's nothing to hide." He offered to provide Philippine experts to offer additional information to the Committee or other U.S. lawmakers as needed. Ambassador's comments in an ambush interview following a March 14 call on new Supreme Court Justice Puno clarified that the hearing was not an investigation into the killings as much as the lawmakers' expression of interest in the Philippines.

[1](#)3. (C) U.S. Deputy National Security Advisor J.D. Crouch's March 12 telephone conversation with Philippine National Security Advisor Norberto Gonzalez prompted Malacanang to convene a National Security Cluster meeting of Cabinet officials on March 15, Executive Secretary Ermita told Ambassador. She encouraged President Arroyo and Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) Chief of Staff General Esperon to use upcoming speeches at the Philippine Military Academy to make strong statements against unlawful killings, especially by members of the Philippine security forces, and to outline the steps the Philippine government and armed forces were undertaking to ensure justice for any and all culprits.

Ongoing outreach

[1](#)4. (SBU) In the meeting with Chief Justice Puno on March 14, Ambassador urged that the new special courts designated by the Supreme Court begin soon to handle prosecutions already in the works, and to ensure swift justice for those responsible for these unlawful killings. She continues to

make the need to stop unlawful killings and to resolve existing cases a major theme of all press remarks, public speeches, and private remarks to senior Philippine civilian and military officials.

15. (SBU) Pol/C has met in recent days with the head of the new AFP Human Rights Office, the Deputy Ombudsman for the Military, the AFP's Judge Advocate General, and the Chairperson of the Philippine Human Rights Commission to encourage further and quick steps to ensure justice soon for any and all responsible for unlawful killings, including those in the military, and to seek additional ways for the USG to help these organs. Mission now hopes to include investigators from the AFP Human Rights Office and the Commission on Human Rights to the April seminar (funded by INL) featuring FBI, DOJ, ICITAP, and NCIS investigators and prosecutors for Philippine investigators and prosecutors.

16. (SBU) Embassy has in recent weeks also brought an expert from the U.S. Marshals Service to meet with Philippine witness protection officials in order to survey existing programs, exchange experiences, and to offer suggestions for improvement to the Philippine witness protection program.

17. (SBU) Ambassador briefed EU Ambassadors on March 14 on U.S. efforts to work with the Philippine government to stimulate more vigorous programs to combat unlawful killings, and urged both the EU and its member governments to seek their own programs, perhaps most immediately helpful focused on the witness protection program. Embosffs on March 14 attended a first-ever UNDP-sponsored coordination meeting of foreign donors on how to coordinate assistance in this area.

Upcoming events

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18. (C) Embassy plans to use an expected late May visit by incoming PACOM Commander Admiral Keating (to attend the Mutual Defense Board/Security Engagement Board meetings) to highlight the need for more progress by the AFP to stop unlawful killings and to request a briefing on AFP efforts so far from the AFP Human Rights Office. EAP A/S Hill's late May visit to Manila (to attend the ARF SOM) will also provide an excellent opportunity to reiterate this message in expected meetings with President Arroyo and others, as will other possible upcoming senior-level visits.

19. (SBU) Our Public Affairs team is coordinating a DVC with U.S. military investigators to offer practical advice to Philippine military investigators on how to conduct complicated investigations.

110. (SBU) Pol/C has also encouraged the new head of the Presidential Human Rights Committee to include a stop in Washington to her April travels to the UN in New York and Geneva, and offered to provide assistance in setting up appointments at State and on Capitol Hill in order to discuss the Philippine government's latest initiatives against unlawful killings.

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KENNEY